

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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ACDA-07 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 /067 W

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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1809

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CA, MILI, MPOL, MARR

SUBJECT: CANADIAN DEFENSE MINISTER COMMENTS ON ROLE OF GOC
NATO FORCES

REF: OTTAWA 4474

1. IN PRESS INTERVIEW AND BEFORE HOUSE OF COMMONS DEFENSE
COMMITTEE THIS WEEK, CANADIAN DEFMIN BARNETT DANSON SAID HE IS
CONSIDERING NEW OR ALTERED ROLE FOR THE 5,000 CANADIAN NATO
TROOPS IN EUROPE. ONE POSSIBILITY IS INCREASING THE PRESENT

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NUMBER OF TROOPS, SOMETHING DANSON SAID HE WOULD THEORETICALLY

LIKE TO DO IF FUNDS WERE AVAILABLE. IN ABSENCE OF INCREASED FUNDING, ANOTHER OPTION (APPARENTLY FAVORED BY DANSON) IS TO CONCENTRATE ALL CANADIAN FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE, AND WITHDRAW FROM THE NORWAY EMERGENCY DEFENSE PLAN. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNT, DANSON "SAID IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO CONSOLIDATE THE TWO ROLES WITH THOSE NOW INTENDED AS NORWEGIAN REINFORCEMENTS BEING SWITCHED TO BECOME CENTRAL FRONT REINFORCEMENTS. THAT COULD MEAN THERE WOULD BE NO NEED TO SEND MORE TROOPS TO EUROPE IN PEACETIME."

2. COMMENT: DANSON'S REMARKS SHOULD BE VIEWED PRIMARILY AS THE MUSINGS OF A MAN RECENTLY APPOINTED TO HIS POSITION. EMBASSY HAS NO EVIDENCE THAT GOC AT THIS TIME IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING ALTERATION OF DEFENSE ROLE IN NATO. HOWEVER, COMMENTS DO REFLECT HIS INTEREST AND DESIRE FOR STRONG CANADIAN CONTRIBUTION. DEPARTMENT MAY RECALL THAT PREDECESSOR JAMES RICHARDSON ALSO HAD SIMILAR THOUGHTS, WHICH WERE QUICKLY ABANDONED WHEN NATO INDICATED ITS LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR SUCH UNILATERAL CHANGE.
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